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County Repeals Local Menu Labeling Ordinance in Anticipation of State Law taking effect Jan. 1, 2009

SAN JOSE, CALIF. —In anticipation of the State Menu Labeling Ordinance (Senate Bill 1420) scheduled to preempt local ordinances on January 1, 2009, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors voted today to repeal the Santa Clara County Menu Labeling Ordinance in order to avoid confusion between the state and county laws.

"We are extremely pleased with the State's action to enact a menu labeling ordinance," said Supervisor Liz Kniss, who championed the County Ordinance. "Adopting a menu labeling ordinance for posting calorie and nutritional information was intended to help consumers make informed decisions when eating out, and the State's legislation will implement that information in a consistent manner throughout the state."

Faced with a growing obesity epidemic and concerned about the inadequacy of voluntary nutritional menu postings, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors unanimously approved and adopted a menu labeling ordinance for unincorporated Santa Clara County in June, which became effective Sept. 1, 2008.

Adopting a menu labeling ordinance for posting calorie and nutritional information was intended to help consumers make informed decisions at restaurants. "We believe that every individual purchasing food at a restaurant should have the opportunity to see the nutritional content of their meal," said Supervisor Ken Yeager. "Menu labeling can help people make smarter and healthier choices."

Studies show that restaurant foods contain almost twice the number of calories estimated by consumers. "With nutrition information, consumers are 24%-37% less likely to select high-calorie items," said Marty Fenstersheib, MD, Health Officer for Santa Clara County. "Calories and fat content aren't hidden so people have information they need when ordering meals."

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